

Dear Senator Bye and Representative Walker,

The governor's proposed flat funding of ECS for the poorest public school systems will result in dire consequences for the state's poorest children. As a 35 year veteran of the Consolidated School District of New Britain, I have seen firsthand how conditions in the local schools have deteriorated so dramatically, that I find it hard to believe that those in power are willing to allow further devastation of educational opportunities for children who have the grave misfortune of living in poverty in the state of Connecticut. Our infrastructure is crumbling, our class sizes are way too large, and we cannot possibly meet the needs of the large numbers of students who face tremendous challenges with learning and social emotional development.

The funding formula is racist and classist at the core, and this proposal only makes it worse. Flat funding the ECS will have devastating consequences in New Britain. We already have class sizes of 29 in Kindergarten, of the 6 Kindergarten classes we have, there is only one veteran teacher because it is too hard for new teachers to succeed in this environment. We don't have space to meet even basic needs. Classes are held on the stage daily, and in the custodian closet several days a week. A recent burst pipe destroyed thousands of dollars of equipment and materials, and without the resources to replace even classroom rugs, children are sitting on cold, hard floors to receive instruction in photocopied books. First and second year teachers have the choice of purchasing basic material for their classes, or letting students go without. This is among the wealthiest states in the country, yet we clearly demonstrate by our budget choices, that we only value children who have to good fortune to be born into the middle class, or be accepted into a magnet or charter school. It makes me ashamed of my vote this past November.

I believed, for many years, that the core of highly committed educators in New Britain would be able to change the trajectory of this school system, and in doing so the trajectory of so many lives. There is nothing left to cut that will not have a devastating effect on the opportunities that we can offer the most vulnerable citizens of our state.

I urge you to let the governor know that his proposal is unacceptable. We cannot, as reasonable people, make such a decision about children who have no political voice.

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The way we speak to our children becomes their inner voice.
-Peggy O'Mara